

Lecture: Fourfold Ministry and Micro Differences¹

In 1976, Yongii Cho established *Church Growth International* for foreign visitors to learn the cell system at a training center at Yoido Church and called upon his old companion, John Hurston, to return to Korea as its director.² Western interest in Yoido's growth had increased. Certain innovations were identified and spread world wide; they are the topic of *Unit 3: The First Wave Interpreted Worldwide*. **What is interesting is what is normal at Yoido and is not perceived, accepted and promoted in the west.** That is the topic of this lecture. When what Westerners adapt and adopt fails to work in the west, it is likely that a key, necessary element has been left behind at Yoido. Systems resist innovation and change; systems are not threatened by innovations that will not work because some essential component or step has been ignored.

The primary pattern of ministry in the early years included worship, prayer in the tent, ministry visitation in homes by both clergy and laity, and later, gathering seekers into cells.³ This fourfold ministry pattern remains true today as the church now serves over 700,000 members. The primary element in the fourfold ministry pattern ignored in the west is the role of house to house visitation by clergy and laity.

Worship: The most successful pattern of evangelism in the world involves no initial participation in worship due to the inconveniences of the size of Yoido Church. New people participate first in the discipleship system, and only later attend worship.⁴ The path to membership begins with a relationship built through ministry visitation followed by an invitation to participate in a friendly small group meeting on the potential convert's home turf and not on an invitation to worship. ***The basic church growth lesson from the world's largest church is stunning but simple: the most successful path to church growth involves inviting people to small groups which build relationships instead of inviting them to worship.***

Persons who become active in a small group will inevitably attend worship with members of that group. Yoido loses no prospective members due to worship visitors slipping through the cracks and wastes no energy on ensuring member assimilation beyond worship involvement. When new converts attend worship for the first time, they are already completely assimilated.

Prayer Meetings: Prayer services occur each day, and prayer is the most common activity of the church that could be considered a program. There is no training program for prayer or staff person in charge of prayer; no bureaucracy develops to manage the church's program of prayer. The church simply gathers to pray and learns how to pray by practicing regular prayer.⁵ Morning prayer services at five a.m.

¹These paragraphs are on the Yoido discipleship system are extracted and revised from *Chapter Two: Discipleship Systems*, www.disciplewalk.com/resources. The original should be consulted for the full footnotes to all sources; links to some of the online resources cited are provided in the workshop materials section for Unit 2.

²David Yongii Cho, *Successful Home Cell Groups* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 1981), 93-101. The website URL is <http://churchgrowthint.homestead.com/home.html>.

³Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 28-29.

⁴Cho, *More Than Numbers*, 44-48.

⁵Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 38. "Normally, believing Christians pray thirty to sixty minutes daily." Paul Yongii Cho, *Prayer: Key to Revival* (Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1984), 108, 136, 135.

have been a custom in Korea since 1907.⁶ They occur Monday through Saturday at Yoido Church.⁷ All-night prayer services began in 1972 and since 1980 occur Sunday through Friday, from ten p.m. to four in the morning.⁸ A special purpose prayer service is held on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. for those desiring to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁹ The church maintains a retreat site, Prayer Mountain, where there are four prayer services daily.¹⁰ During home visitation, lay leaders invite non-Christians to the weekly cell meeting, welcome them there, and invite them to go with cell members to one of the many prayer services to pray for God's help for their special needs.¹¹ In all worship and prayer services, those who desire conversion are asked to stand and are led in a prayer of conversion while they are surrounded by supportive cell members.¹² Customs such as "Jericho prayer" and "Daniel prayer" guide the faithful in patterns of purposeful prayer.¹³ Rather than provide programs to meet needs, the primary activity of this church is gathering to pray and ask God to meet needs.

Ministry Visitation in Micro-mission fields: Evangelism at Yoido has an explicit territorial, geographical emphasis. Geographical districts of cell networks mimic the old parish system.

Evangelism focuses on the immediate geographical neighborhood of the cell leader. The Korean term for cell leader is literally *ku-yok jang* which means "leader in one's small geographical territory or area." These leaders "have spiritual oversight of a specific area and are responsible to visit participants and reach out to non-Christian neighbors."¹⁴ Cell groups identify needs within the lives of specific people in their micro-mission field and set goals;¹⁵ the cell group then visits and prays for and with specific people in their neighborhood. Gift giving, ranging from gifts at special occasions¹⁶ to the

⁶Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 39.

⁷Pastor Cho's description of his schedule indicates that he attends few of these meetings. They are a ministry of his staff and lay leaders, thereby enhancing differentiation, diversity, and leadership growth. Cf. Cho, *Prayer: Key to Revival*, 136-138.

⁸Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 40-42. The Wednesday night and Friday night prayer services have the highest attendance, drawing twenty-five thousand. Hurston's research shows that more than half of the cell leaders attend all-night prayer meeting on a weekly basis. Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 213. Cf. Cho, *Prayer: Key to Revival*, 111-112.

⁹Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 43.

¹⁰Ibid., 3, 6, 7, 11, 55. Cho indicated when membership was 370,000 in 1984 that on average three thousand people, or almost 1% of members, were praying every day at Prayer Mountain. Cho, *Prayer: Key to Revival*, 108, 136.

¹¹Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 40.

¹²Ibid., 105, 106.

¹³Ibid., 47, 48, 39.

¹⁴Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 72. It is westerners, not Yoido Church, who adopted the word "cell group" in order to emphasize biological metaphor of cell multiplication.

¹⁵Ibid., 101.

¹⁶Ibid., 74. This is also an expectation within the cell.

personal delivery of a copy of the weekly church newspaper is culturally valued and offers a valid reason to visit a non-Christian.¹⁷ Cell groups focus on ministering to their neighbors in micro-mission fields; they solve small, local human problems through building helpful relationships first horizontally between neighbors and then vertically between those neighbors and Jesus Christ through prayer to meet needs.¹⁸

Focus on specific people: The cell group chooses specific individual people to reach out toward. Yoido Pastor Yongii Cho: *You know, we don't do evangelism in Korea the way you do it in the West . . . We have 50,000 cell groups and each group will love two people to Christ within the next year. They select someone who's not a Christian, whom they can pray for, love and serve. They bring meals, help sweep out the person's store— whatever it takes to show they really care for them. When a person asks, "Why are you treating me so well?" our people answer, "Jesus told us that we're supposed to do good to all men, and we want you to know that we love you, and so does Jesus." After three or four months of such love, the hardest soul softens up and surrenders to Christ.*¹⁹

Christ commanded his followers to love their neighbors; Yoido Church practices this command literally. Cells are generally homogenous but begin through ministry visitation among strangers in a micro-mission field. Persons who have been displaced from their former networks of relationships are psychologically ready to form new networks in their new environment. Cells take advantage of this opportunity by inviting displaced persons into their small group community.²⁰ Ministry visits make strangers into friends. A focus on existing relationships in one person's *oikos* network soon exhausts the potential of those relationships. The local neighborhood focus in a transient society provides a never-ending stream of potential converts as cell leaders build increasing relational influence in their neighborhoods.

Persons are assimilated into the discipleship system by home ministry visitation prior to becoming Christians or even attending the cell. Participation in the cell is the outcome of visitation. When the person finally visits the cell, he or she is not a stranger. The focus in neighborhood visitation is on ministry to the simple needs of individuals, not the insoluble problems of the community as a whole.

¹⁷The four page *Full Gospel News* "contains a summary of Dr. Cho's previous Sunday sermon, notes for the upcoming home cell meeting lesson, at least one personal testimony of healing or salvation, and assorted church news." Weekly circulation in 1978 was ten thousand copies; the name was changed to *Full Gospel Family* in 1994. In 1990 the circulation had climbed to 1.4 million copies each week; each week the church gives each staff pastor two thousand copies to distribute through cell leaders. Each copy delivered is an opportunity for conversation. Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 103, 218.

¹⁸Ibid., 104. Yoido's ministry is massively decentralized through the use of cells working in micro-mission fields functioning as geographical and sociological niches. Each cell functions as a local niche for a crossing the chasm diffusion strategy. Cf. Christopher P. Scheitle "Organizational Niches and Religious Markets: Uniting Two Literatures," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 3, 2007, <http://www.religjournal.com/> (accessed June 12, 2007).

¹⁹Carl F. George, *The Coming Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1994), 93-94. Note the similarity to the Moravian humility that so influenced Wesley on January 25, 1736. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 1:21-22.

²⁰For a discussion of people movements and ministry to displaced persons, see Craig Miller, *NextChurch.Now*, 37-54. Individuals approaching individuals as geographical neighbors overcomes racial, ethnic, and class barriers according to Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make A Big Difference* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 2002), 35. Cf. Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 8-13.

Focus on problems of individuals: Visitation focuses on building relationships that solve human problems, in prayer, and in ways that help each person directly.²¹ *Okja found something else that helped in bringing people to the Savior: "When I talked with these people we had targeted to evangelize," she said, "I discovered one thing. If a person ever told me of a need or problem, it let me know that person was receptive. It never failed that I could then lead that person to faith in Jesus Christ."*

*The ultimate aim of evangelistic visitation is to find people with needs and problems and then lead them to the Problem Solver, Jesus Christ. A subdistrict leader, Leebu Pak, tells her cell leaders, "Look for problems. When you find someone with a problem, you are almost guaranteed that person will come to Jesus."*²²

Far more time in ministry is spent upon personal visitation than upon preparing for the cell meeting event. The focus of cell leaders and staff pastors is upon ministering directly to troubled persons face to face on their own turf.²³

Ministry visits are not social calls nor do they focus on friendships. Ministry visits target specific needs in specific people which the cell seeks to resolve by many personal visits on seeker turf, prayer and signs of caring. Ministry visits begin the spiritual mentoring process in a hierarchy of involvement as cell members, cell leader, section leader, senior deacon or deaconess and staff pastor all visit the seeker in teams, one after another, in order to pray over the seeker's difficulty. When the problem resolves, the responsibility for success is assigned to Jesus Christ the problem solver. If the problem worsens, the caring solidarity of the visitation increases and the person feels loving support in the isolation of his or her suffering, as in, "When I was in greatest need, it was the Christians who came to me."

Cell leaders, section leaders, deacons and deaconesses, staff pastors and elders spend many more hours in personal visitation than in cell meetings, both in visitation of the lost and visitation of cell leaders and church members who are struggling.

Staff focus on visitation rather than events, programs or committees: Visitation is an old, traditional ministry discipline. Yet staff pastors at Yoido watching over an average of two thousand members do more prayer and personal visitation than a full-time pastor in America watching over one hundred church attenders.²⁴ It is not that laity take up all the other administration and programming; there is no such comparative programming or endless committee meetings to interfere with ministry visitation. Without events, programs or committees to consume time, all that is left is prayer and relational visitation.

²¹Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 99-100.

²²Ibid., 104.

²³Karen Hurston, "A Day in the Life of a Staff Pastor: A Study in Contrasts," *Church Growth Today* 9, no. 3, under http://www.hurstonministries.org/art_c_05.htm (accessed June 18, 2007).

²⁴"While the average cell leader prays for one hour daily, the typical staff pastor prays for at least two hours. While the average cell leader makes three to five prayer visits a week, the typical staff pastor makes ninety-one prayer visits each month. More than seven hundred full-time pastoral staff members start their days five mornings a week in prayer and reporting, then spend eight hour days making prayer visits to leaders and members, always accompanied by at least one lay leader." Karen Hurston, "The Small Groups Behind the World's Largest Church," *Strategies for Today's Leader* 36, no. 2, (Spring 1999): 15-17, under http://www.hurstonministries.org/art_c_03.htm (accessed June 13, 2007).

Yoido staff pastors begin their work day with an hour or more of prayer and spend the remainder of their time in ministry visitation accompanied by their lay leaders.²⁵ During the annual Grand Home Visitation, 171 ordained pastors and 356 non-ordained pastors systematically visit all 700,000 members in their homes or businesses in a three-month period.²⁶ A typical staff pastor works with up to fifteen section leaders, one hundred cell group leaders and two thousand church members.²⁷

Slow advancement of leaders: Yoido does not rapidly bring laity into leadership or on staff. The typical staff pastor is a married woman between the ages of thirty-five and forty-four, has children, has been a Christian for sixteen to twenty years and has attended the church between ten and fourteen years.²⁸ The 700,000 members of Yoido Church receive significantly more direct pastoral visitation than members of small American churches in the parish system, and far more visitation from laity who are neighbors. These carefully nurtured relationships bring people into cells and from cells into the church.

Microprogramming: Yoido Church is not a program base design church.²⁹ The entire church participates in the fourfold ministry pattern of worship, prayer meeting, ministry visitation and cell on weekdays; other ministries are large in number by Western standards but are a minuscule fraction of the total membership at Yoido Church. For example, fifteen hundred persons participate in twelve adult choirs; each sings in one service a week, but this number is statistically insignificant compared to the 12,000 present in the main sanctuary at worship.³⁰

Yoido runs a Sunday school with twenty thousand children in attendance which is perhaps one of the largest in the world, but this is statistically insignificant compared to the 253,000 present at worship.³¹ Children's cell groups minister to more children on their home turf: *An estimated 70% of the more than twenty-five thousand children involved in these groups come from homes where the parents are not believers. These groups form one of the most evangelistic outreaches of the church. The children themselves do most of the outreach, bringing friends to the teacher's neighborhood home to hear about Jesus.*³² Leaders develop a great variety of diversified and decentralized non-cell microprogramming ministries that do not become the focus of the entire church because statistically few people participate

²⁵Ibid., 13, 37, 63, 220. Cf. Hurston, "A Day in the Life."

²⁶A typical staff pastor will visit three hundred homes during the Grand Home Visitation, averaging ten homes per day. Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 117, 219.

²⁷Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 219-220.

²⁸Ibid., 219. For more information on the decision to use women in ministry, see Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 83-88.

²⁹For the original description of the Program Base Design paradigm for the traditional church, see Neighbour, *Where Do We Go*, 38-92.

³⁰Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 165.

³¹Ibid., 163.

³²Ibid., 91.

in them.³³ The focus remains on evangelism and the fourfold ministry pattern.

Microscheduling: Microprogramming vastly enhances differentiation, but the major programming effort of the church is confined to Sundays.

Yoido has more than twenty ***outreach fellowships*** which target different segments of society; cells meet on weekdays and outreach fellowships plan and work on Sundays.³⁴ Programs play a minor role; about thirty thousand Yoido members support the outreach fellowships by financial support, and far fewer by participation.³⁵ This is about 12% of the average worship attendance. A great variety of innovative programming is available at Yoido, but it is diversified and decentralized; people participate where they feel called and gifted. Statistically few people participate in any program, resulting in a large number of small, diverse "microprograms" while all participate in the "hedgehog" fourfold ministry of worship, prayer, ministry visitation and cell.³⁶ This approach would replace one large youth program at the main facility with hundreds of small youth cells, all different, all highly differentiated to meet local needs, all lay led, and all meeting in the local neighborhood.

The ***Farming and Fishing Communities Outreach Fellowship***, for example, helps small rural churches. Yoido members will ride a bus to a rural village on Sunday, pray, spend the afternoon in ministry visitation, lead an evangelistic service that evening, and incorporate converts into cells in the host church.³⁷ This program is another example of the fourfold ministry pattern of worship, prayer meeting, ministry visitation and cell. Most outreach fellowships are initiated by lay leaders and all are run by lay leaders; staff do not lead in programming at Yoido but focus on the fourfold ministry pattern.

Korean families, with a six-day work week, are under more time pressure than busy Americans; American objections to cell life usually focus on a lack of time. One cell church principle which could be applied in American churches is to restrict programming and committee meetings to Sunday, the day when most people are available. This would leave the other six days open for relational spiritual growth through the fourfold ministry pattern of the Yoido discipleship system. ***Perhaps it is time to shift from a program-driven "seven day a week church" to a more traditional implementation of the sabbath focus on only one day of church planning and programming.***³⁸

³³The exception, of course, is the cell ministry; 70% of deacons serve as cell leaders. Cf. Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 68-69.

³⁴Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 124-125.

³⁵Hurston, *Growing the World's Largest Church*, 133.

³⁶A Hedgehog principle describes an innovative company's primary focus; it is a concept from Jim Collins, *Good To Great: Why Some Companies Make The Leap ... And Others Don't* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 90-119.

³⁷Ibid., 126-128. The particular visit described is at the invitation of a woman pastor at a rural Methodist church; the visitation and service helped this small Methodist church to grow in one day from seventy to two hundred members. Teams can return up to twice a year. The outreach is ecumenical with the only requirement that the church be evangelical. The Fellowship provides financial assistance to over five hundred struggling rural churches.

³⁸Cf. Lyle Schaller, *The Seven Day a Week Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992).

Microgovernance: Yongii Cho and a few others provide leadership that sets direction.³⁹ Only a relatively few creative leaders are needed for this giant church to function; rather than continually reinventing itself and focusing on planning something new, the majority focus on diligent labor in the harvest. The pastoral staff of 171 ordained pastors, 356 non-ordained pastors and 100,113 lay leaders focus on the implementation of the fourfold ministry pattern.⁴⁰ The 1319 elders, all men, set policy but are also leaders in service. Statistically, this is *microgovernance*; elders represent half of 1% of attenders and there is one elder for every 530 members. While 1 in 7 members serves in leadership, their energy is shifted to direct service to Jesus Christ and away from institutional governance through committees. Yoido's leadership focuses on service, not representative governance.

Microinnovation: Emergent church theory advises continual innovation and reinvention.⁴¹ Diffusion of innovation theory suggests this would exclude 84% of a given population. The focus of Yoido Church is not on continual innovation but faithful implementation of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ through the most effective discipleship system in the world.

Conclusion

Every member at Yoido participates in a fourfold ministry of worship, prayer meeting, ministry visitation (as a visitor or a recipient) and cell. Even the smallest American churches can provide this fourfold ministry pattern.

The closest thing in my opinion to the geographically focused Yoido discipleship system in America is the way Willow Creek is transitioning to neighborhood small groups. Materials on this topic are available under the Workshop Materials section in a folder entitled "Application in the USA."

³⁹Ibid., 79. Cf. Bill Easum and Bil Cornelius, *Go Big: Lead Your Church to Explosive Growth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 19-40, 79-80.

⁴⁰Yoido Full Gospel Church, *Organization*; <http://english.fgtv.com/yoido/organi.asp> (accessed June 18, 2007).

⁴¹ Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 11-26.